



## Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

### INDOOR AIR QUALITY TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS UPDATE

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#### News and Events

- **Implementing an IAQ program is hard work. Apply for an IAQ TFS Award to get the recognition — and the glory — you deserve.** Winners of EPA's awards are well-rewarded for their excellence and effort: [apply today](#) for the [National Excellence](#), [National Model of Sustained Excellence](#) and the NEW [National IAQ TFS Connector Award](#)! Winners receive an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., to attend the 2010 IAQ TFS National Symposium and are honored at a special Awards Ceremony. And don't forget about our non-competitive awards, the [National Great Start](#) and [National Leadership](#) Awards.
- [Registration has launched](#) for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual **IAQ Tools for Schools National Symposium**! We invite you to join IAQ experts and peers from across the nation at this premiere event in Washington, D.C., on January 14-16, 2010. Visit [www.iaqsymposium.com](http://www.iaqsymposium.com) to find out why this year is *the* year to attend.
- **Connecticut Schools Go Green!** Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell has signed legislation requiring the use of green cleaning products and practices in all Connecticut's schools. The law won't take effect until July 2011, but many schools are getting a head start! [Watch a YouTube video](#) of the ABC affiliate in Connecticut, WTNH News, broadcast a story announcing the exciting development!

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#### The Importance of Surveying Customers

If anyone can tell you how your IAQ management program is performing in terms of responsiveness, education, and the overall efficacy of your work, it's your customers. As obvious as it sounds, it's important to realize that the people you serve are the ones best able to tell you how well your program is performing for them. This makes it essential to develop a system for soliciting and receiving feedback from your customers to ensure your program's relevancy and long-term success.

Surveying customers is an integral component of at least three [Key Drivers](#) of the IAQ TFS Program Framework, the core of EPA's [guidance in creating effective and sustainable IAQ management programs](#). To effectively *Assess Your Environments Continuously, Evaluate Your Results for Continuous Improvement, and Communicate with Everyone, All the Time*, you need to develop mechanisms to find out what your customers are saying and experiencing. Asking for feedback and acting on what you hear enhances your IAQ program's success because it builds the credibility, trust, and support for your program that is necessary for its sustainability.

There are many approaches to collecting feedback from the people you serve, and one approach is not necessarily better than any other. You and your team should think about your district's particular needs and

determine which will work best. When thinking about the structure of your approach, keep the following guidelines at the forefront:

1. **Make sure that no matter what mechanism you use, everyone can access it and everyone knows about it.** For example, if it's difficult for a teacher to access a printer, it would be unwise to make a feedback form that a teacher must print out. Or if you have a suggestion box, put it in a central location like the front office instead of in the facilities office that is two miles away from the main campus.

*Faculty program example:* the School Board of Broward County (FL) initiated an online, anonymous survey tool that goes hand-in-hand with their online work order system. Everyone in the district can access the work order system and survey tool through their district's Intranet.

2. **Be prepared for criticism.** And embrace it! After all, that's what you need to improve your program. Consider all feedback valid and try to find its root cause. For example, if you receive criticism about not being strict enough on the ban on air fresheners, but you actually do have strict policies in place, it could be an indication that additional staff training about your IAQ policies is needed. Then make it a point to pay special attention the next time you do walkthroughs.

*Faculty program example:* Blue Valley School District (KY) began to include a written feedback survey as part of their annual indoor environment survey. They set a bold goal of receiving at least 4 out of 5 points from 100% of respondents, and they have tracked their success over the years. It took Blue Valley a long time to come close to reaching its goal, but the team took advantage of initial criticism to build relationships and trust in their ability to meet their customers' needs. The positive ratings followed.

3. **Act quickly on the feedback you receive,** and then make it well known that you respond to suggestions or complaints. For example, you could write a short blurb about an action you took in response to specific feedback and publish it in your school newsletter. Or, the principal at the affected school could make a morning announcement about the exciting new improvement. You'll know you've succeeded in establishing a reputation as responsive problem-solvers when you start to receive positive feedback in addition to complaints.

*Faculty program example:* West Carrollton School District (OH) uses the results of their annual building occupant surveys to design their walkthroughs. They make sure to tell all the teachers what they are using the surveys for, and then follow up throughout the year to let people know how to report IAQ issues. West Carrollton ensures that responsive actions are always carried out, and update the complainant as they progress toward a resolution. Because of this, West Carrollton's Environmental Health and Safety Team enjoys trust and credibility from their customers.

We asked [Schools IAQ Connector Listserv](#) members what customer feedback strategies they use to evaluate and assess their programs and here are some of the things that are working in diverse school districts:

- A district in New York incorporates feedback and suggestions into their routine IAQ concern form. The individual notes his or her concern, standard information like location and room number, and suggestions they may have for correcting the problem. This initial complaint is handled at the school level to ensure a quick, personalized response.
- In a Kentucky district, IAQ complaint forms can be picked up in the front office of each school or downloaded online. Complaints are investigated within a week, but are first followed up with a personal phone call to understand the unique situation surrounding the complaint. Complainants are updated continually on the progress toward resolution. As a result of the district's dedication to a high level of customer service, the teacher's union is highly supportive of the IAQ program and encourages teachers to use the complaint form to report concerns
- A Canadian school district includes an Indoor Source Environment Checklist as part of their IAQ complaint form to pair education about evaluating one's environment for possible sources of problems along with taking action to address a complaint.

Read more about the Key Drivers and learn what the strategies for surveying customers look like when they are put into action in the [Envisioning Excellence](#) document. The districts profiled in Envisioning Excellence manage some of the nation's highest-performing IAQ management programs.

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## Insight into Excellence: Seattle Public Schools, Leadership Award, 2009

Though Seattle Public Schools only recently applied for (and received) the *IAQ TFS* National Leadership Award, the district has been a leader in IAQ management in the Northwestern U.S. since 1995 when they proactively implemented the *IAQ TFS* Program in recognition of the effects of IAQ on student and staff health and performance.

Short on technical resources to evaluate their 100+ school sites, the district reached out to their EPA Region 10 school's representative to help them develop an approach. EPA Region 10 connected them with the Washington State University Indoor Air Quality Program and the Seattle-King County Public Health Department to help them conduct IAQ walkthroughs and take CO<sub>2</sub>, CO, and other measurements to help them gauge the health of their buildings. They partnered with the American Lung Association and the Washington and King County Asthma Forums on asthma education, and yet another partnership allowed Seattle Public Schools to implement a comprehensive Integrated Pest Management Program.

Seattle Public Schools has discovered the power of partnerships for accomplishing major milestones in IAQ management program success, and they envision current and future partnerships as being key to their sustainability. Seattle Public Schools is a great example of how sometimes all it takes to get the help you need is to ask!

Find resources in your area that can help you improve your program: [find your local EPA Regional representative](#) or [find an EPA IAQ award-winning district in your state](#) to share approaches and partnerships.

Share your IAQ success story today by applying for EPA's non-competitive [Great Start](#) and [Leadership Awards](#). These awards recognize new and developing IAQ management initiatives. Applications are accepted year round. If your IAQ program is more established, consider applying for the [National Excellence Award](#).

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## Have Your Questions Answered

Is there a topic you want to see covered in an *IAQ TFS* Update? Need more information or have a quick question? Do you have suggestions for a Webinar, an Update feature or are you simply curious about an IAQ topic and would like more information? If so, send us an e-mail at [IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com](mailto:IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com).

**Share YOUR news and events!** Send us information to share with the school IAQ community. It could be featured in the next Update. E-mail your news to [IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com](mailto:IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com).

If you like what you're reading, maybe a friend or colleague would too — forward this e-mail! To subscribe to the *IAQ TFS* Update, send an e-mail to [IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com](mailto:IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com) with "subscribe" in the subject line.

The *IAQ TFS* Program is a comprehensive resource to help schools maintain a healthy environment in school buildings by identifying, correcting and preventing IAQ problems. Learn more about the *IAQ TFS* Program at [www.epa.gov/iaq/schools](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools).



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